1:Spier E-5 (1929-1932) 1933 NT15 River Yumans NT15
Maricopa

# CHAPTER II

## BASIS OF SUBSISTENCE

177 241 Since the basis of subsistence of the Maricopa and their allies has changed greatly since aboriginal days it is by no means easy to draw a picture of the original food quest. Even before white settlers appeared, Maricopa acquisition of wheat from Mexico had almost entirely displaced the cultivation of corn, and since that day dependence on traders' products has almost obliterated [439] what remained of their original habits.

262 184 The staples of the Maricopa and of the Halchidhoma while still on the Colorado seem to have been identical and used in much the same proportion. There is a possibility, however, that the Halchidhoma cultivated corn somewhat more than their Gila relatives and had access to more fish. In contrast, then, they depended less on mesquite and rabbits. This must remain an inference based on what is known of other lower California peoples, since Halchidhoma informants no longer know precisely what ancestral life on the Colorado was like.

●22 [243] [462] The Maricopa seem to have depended largely on gathering mesquite beans, hunting jackrabbits, and on fishing. Relatively little corn was cultivated. The picture of the food quest drawn by informants shows that women were occupied every day gathering mesquite beans during the season, while the men hunted hard by for rabbits or fished. The quest was unceasing: "people starved in those days unless men and women kept at it all day long." Kutox maintained that in those days children were undernourished: [146] "a child of two or more might not be able to stand because it lacked food." On the other hand, Bartlett (1852) makes it appear that Pima and Maricopa cultivation was so great as to allow long periods of inactivity.[1]

137 Yet mesquite was abundant in the valley, especially in the

[1] Bartlett, *Personal Narrative*, II, 264. [Text continues on page 50.]

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## TABLE II

### CALENDAR OF THE FOOD QUEST.

| | | WILD PLANTS GATHERED | CULTIVATION | | HUNTING AND FISHING |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Planting | Harvesting | |
| January... | Trees bud | | | | |
| February... | Floods | | Corn<br>Beans, black-eyed peas, pumpkins | | |
| March... | | Cholla beans | Watermelons | | |
| April.... | Rainy | | Cotton | | Mountain sheep |
| May..... | | Berries | | Beans, peas | Caterpillars |
| June..... | | Crucifixion thorn berries<br>Giant cactus fruit | | Corn, watermelons, pumpkins | |
| July..... | Excessive heat | Mesquite | Pumpkins<br>Watermelons<br>Cotton<br>Beans<br>Peas<br>Corn | | Jackrabbits<br>Fish |
| August.... | Floods | | | | |
| September. | Rainy | Opuntia fruit<br>Ironwood nuts | | | |
| October... | | agwa'vâ leaves | | | Caterpillars |
| November. | | | | Pumpkins<br>Watermelons<br>Corn | Deer |
| December. | Floods, excessive cold* | Wild seeds | | | |

*The climatological conditions are those of a desert. Temperatures range between the extremes of 120°F. and 18° F., with means in January 51°, July 91°. The temperature is one or two degrees lower above Gila Bend than in the low country downstream. The growing season is 260 to 300 days in length. Variations in rainfall are extreme along the river. The annual precipitation ranges from seven to nine inches in the Casa Grande-Sacaton region down to three and less in the vicinity of Mohawk on the lower river. Rains fall mostly in January, March, and August (*Climatological Data*). Flood stages of the river, affected perhaps more by rain and melting snow along the higher tributaries, occur in March (February to April), secondarily about August and in December (Ross, *The Gila Region*, pp. 106–7). The climatic observations in the tables above are those of the Indians.